

James M. Buchanan and the Political Economy of Desegregation

Phillip W. Magness , Art Carden , Vincent Geloso 

First published: 18 December 2018

<https://doi.org/10.1002/soej.12317>

Citations: 25

Abstract

Were 1986 Nobel Laureate James M. Buchanan's formative contributions to political economy inspired in significant part by hostility to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision? Nancy MacLean's 2017 *Democracy in Chains* argues that public choice economics emerged from an opportunistic alliance with Virginia's "Massive Resistance" to school integration and should thus be situated within the racially tinged tradition of southern conservatism. While Buchanan wrote very little on the economics of race, archival evidence and his published works do not support this thesis. Buchanan's work is better understood with reference to his Chicago school mentor Frank Knight and the Italian public finance tradition rather than southern conservatism. To the contrary, we suggest Buchanan believed the competitive processes generated by an educational voucher system would likely undermine rather than rescue the racially segregated status quo. Furthermore, Buchanan's associations and activities suggest that racial hierarchy was not part of his normative vision.

References

Adler, Jonathan H. 2017. Does 'Democracy in Chains' paint an accurate picture of James Buchanan? [with updates]. *Washington Post*, Volokh Conspiracy Blog, June 28, 2017. Online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/06/28/does-democracy-in-chains-paint-an-accurate-picture-of-james-buchanan/?utm_term=.02ac28caa9de. Last accessed November 15, 2017.

 | [Google Scholar](#) |

Bartley, Numan V. 1999. *The rise of Massive Resistance: Race and politics in the south during the 1950's*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press.

 | [Google Scholar](#) |

Bass, Jack. 1995. *The transformation of southern politics: Social change and political consequence since 1945*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

 | [Google Scholar](#) |

Becker, Gary S. 1957. *The Economics of Discrimination*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Bernstein, David. 2017. Some dubious claims in Nancy MacLean's 'Democracy in Chains.' *Washington Post Volokh Conspiracy Blog*, June 28, 2017. Online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2017/06/28/some-dubious-claims-in-nancy-macleans-democracy-in-chains/?utm_term=.882550c10023. Last accessed November 15, 2017.

[Google Scholar](#)

Brennan, Geoffrey, and James M. Buchanan. 1980. *The Power to Tax*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1948. "Fiscal equity in a federal state." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1949. The pure theory of government finance: A suggested approach. *Journal of Political Economy* 57(6): 496–505.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1959. Positive economics, welfare economics, and political economy. *Journal of Law and Economics* 2: 124–38.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1960. *The Public Finances*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1965. *The Public Finances*. 2nd edition. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1970. *The Public Finances*. 3rd edition. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1969. *Cost and Choice: An inquiry into economic theory*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1964. What should economists do. *Southern Economic Journal* 30: 213–22 Reprinted in v. 1 of *The Collected Works of James Buchanan*, pp. 28–42.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1968. Student revolts, academic liberalism, and constitutional attitudes. *Social Research* 35(4): 666–80.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1973. America's Third century in perspective. *Atlantic Economic Journal* 1: 3–12 Reprinted in v. 19 of *The Collected Works of James Buchanan*, pp. 173–186.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1981. Equal treatment and reverse discrimination. In *Social justice*, edited by R. L. Braham. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Netherlands, pp. 79–93.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1982. Foreword to Frank H. Knight. In *Freedom and Reform: Essays in economics and social philosophy*. Indianapolis: Liberty Press, pp. ix–xiv.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1988. Economists and the gains-from-trade. *Managerial and Decision Economics* 9: 5–12.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 1992. *Better than Plowing and Other Personal Essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M. 2007. Economics from the Outside. In *“Better than plowing” and beyond*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M., and Gordon Tullock. 1962. *The Calculus of Consent*. Ann Harbor MI: University of Michigan Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Buchanan, James M., and Warren J. Samuels. 1975. On some fundamental issues in political economy: an exchange of correspondence. *Journal of Economic Issues* 9(1): 15–38.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Carden, Art. 2017-18. Buchanan's big idea: review of Richard Wagner, *James M. Buchanan and liberal political economy: a rational reconstruction*. *Regulation* 40(4): 61-2.

[Google Scholar](#)

Carden, Art 2017. "Democracy in Chains" is the perfect book for the age of trump. The Reasons Will Surprise You. *Forbes.com*. Online: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/artcarden/2017/07/07/democracy-in-chains-is-the-perfect-book-for-the-age-of-trump-but-the-reasons-why-will-surprise-you/#2f6a6c395c2c>. Last accessed November 15, 2017.

[Google Scholar](#)

Carden, Art, and Phillip W. Magness. 2017. Buchanan the evil genius: Review of Nancy MacLean, *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. *Regulation* 40(3): 60-4.

[Google Scholar](#)

Carden, Art, Phillip W. Magness, and Vincent Geloso. 2017. "Situating southern influences in the work of James M. Buchanan." Working Paper, available online: SSRN. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3008867>

[Google Scholar](#)

Catterall, Ralph T. 1956. Judicial self-restraint: The obligation of the judiciary. *American Bar Association Journal* 42: 829.

[Google Scholar](#)

Darity, William A. 1987. Abram Harris: an Odyssey from Howard to Chicago. *The Review of Black Political Economy* 15(3): 4-40.

[Google Scholar](#)

Darity, William A. 2017. The Violence of 'Liberty' in Book Symposium on Nancy MacLean, Policy Trajectories, American Sociological Association. Available online: <http://policytrajectories.asa-comparative-historical.org/2017/08/book-symposium-democracy-in-chains/>. Last Accessed November 15, 2017.

[Google Scholar](#)

Doherty, Brian. 2017. "What Nancy MacLean Gets Wrong About James Buchanan." *Reason.com*. Available online: <http://reason.com/archives/2017/07/20/what-nancy-maclean-gets-wrong-about-jame/>. Last Accessed November 15, 2017.

[Google Scholar](#)

Egger, John B. 1994. The contributions of W.H. Hutt. *Review of Austrian Economics* 7(1): 107-38.

[Google Scholar](#)

Ely, James W. Jr. 1976. *The Crisis of Conservative Virginia: The Byrd organization and the politics of massive resistance*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Farrant, Andrew, and Vlad Tarko. 2018. James M. Buchanan's 1981 visit to Chile: Knightian democrat or defender of the 'Devil's fix'? *The Review of Austrian Economics* 1–20 (forthcoming).

[Google Scholar](#)

Fleury, Jean-Baptiste. 2012. Wandering through the Borderlands of the Social Sciences: Gary Becker's *Economics of Discrimination*. *History of Political Economy* 44(1): 1–40.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Fleury, Jean-Baptiste, and Alain Marciano. 2018a. The sound of silence: a review essay of Nancy MacLean's *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. *Journal of Economic Literature* (forthcoming).

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Fleury, Jean-Baptiste and Marciano, Alain. 2018b. "The making of a constitutionalist: James Buchanan on Education." Forthcoming, *History of Political Economy*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2994683>, last accessed February 27, 2018.

[Google Scholar](#)

Friedman, Milton. 1955. The role of government in education. In *Economics and the public interest*, edited by R. A. Solo. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp. 123–44.

[Google Scholar](#)

Friedman, Milton. 1962. *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Gates, Robbins L. 1962. *The making of Massive Resistance Virginia: the politics of public school desegregation, 1954–1956*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Gross, Ariela. 2018. A grassroots history of colorblind conservative constitutionalism. *Law & Social Inquiry* 43(Winter): 1.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hershman, James H. 1978. "The opponents of Virginia's massive resistance." Doctoral Dissertation, University of Virginia.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hershman, James H. 1998. Massive resistance meets its match: the emergence of a pro-public school majority. In *The Moderates' Dilemma: massive resistance to school desegregation in Virginia*, edited by Lassiter and Lewis. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, pp. 104–33.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hilts, Philip J. 1973. The saga of James J. Kilpatrick. *Potomac*, September 16 69(72): 12–5.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hirschman, Albert O. 1970. *Exit, voice, and loyalty: responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Horwitz, Steven. 2017. Review of *Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right's Stealth Plan for America*. *Cato Journal* 37(3): 593–608.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hustwit, William P. 2013. *James J. Kilpatrick: salesman for segregation*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hutt, William Harold. 1964. *Economics of the Colour Bar*. London: Merritt & Hatcher.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hutt, William Harold. 1966a. Unanimity versus non-discrimination (as criteria for constitutional validity). *South African Journal of Economics* 34(2): 133–47.

[Google Scholar](#)

Hutt, William Harold. 1966b. Civil rights and young conservatives. *Modern Age* 10(3): 231–9.

[Google Scholar](#)

Knight, Frank H. 1939. Ethics and economic reform. III. Christianity. *Economica* 6(24): 398–422.

[Google Scholar](#)

Knight, Frank H. 1941. The meaning of democracy: its politico-economic structure and ideals. *Journal of Negro Education* 10(3): 218–332.

[Google Scholar](#)

Knight, Frank H. 1960. *Intelligence and Democratic Action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

M. D. Lassiter, and A. B. Lewis, eds. 1998. *The Moderates' Dilemma: massive resistance to school desegregation in Virginia*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Lewin, Peter. 2000. William Hutt and the economics of apartheid. *Constitutional Political Economy* 11(3): 255–64.

[Google Scholar](#)

MacLean, Nancy. 2017. *Democracy in Chains: The deep history of the radical right's stealth plan for America*. New York: Viking.

[Google Scholar](#)

Magness, Phillip W. 2017. A note on Democracy in Chains. *Modern Age* 59(4): 91–5.

[Google Scholar](#)

Manhattan Institute. 1983. W.H. Hutt: an economist for this century. *Manhattan Report* 3(5): 1–11.

[Google Scholar](#)

Mitchell, Broadus. 1961. Review of Frank H. Knight, intelligence and democratic action. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 333(1): 185.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Moreton, Bethany. 2017. Kochonomics: the racist roots of public choice theory. *Boston Review*, August: 10.

[Google Scholar](#)

Munger, Michael C. 2018. On the origins and goals of public choice: constitutional conspiracy. *Independent Review* 22(3): 359–82.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Nutter, G. Warren. 1969. Economic aspects of freedom. In *Liberty under Law, Anarchy, Totalitarianism*. American Bar Association, Standing Committee on Education About Communism.

[Google Scholar](#)

Nutter, G. Warren and James M. Buchanan. 1959. "The economics of universal education." Thomas Jefferson Center for Political Economy, University of Virginia.

[Google Scholar](#)

Obrochta, William B. 1985. "The political career of Robert Whitehead." Master's Thesis, University of Richmond.

[Google Scholar](#)

Phillips-Fein, Kim. 2017. Mont Pelerin in Virginia. *The Nation* September 25.

[Google Scholar](#)

Rae, Douglas W. 1975. The limits of consensual decision. *American Political Science Review* 69(4): 1270-94.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Rasche, Pamela J. 1977. "Leon Dure and the Freedom of Association." Master's Thesis, University of Virginia.

[Google Scholar](#)

Ravitch, Diane. 2017. Big money rules. *New York Review of Books* 64(19).

[Google Scholar](#)

Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff. 2008. *The Race Beat: the press, the civil rights struggle, and the awakening of a nation*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

[Google Scholar](#)

Rothbard, Murray N. 1988. William Harold Hutt, in Memoriam. *Newsletter of the Mont Pelerin Society (June-December)*: 33.

[Google Scholar](#)

Slobodian, Quinn. 2018. *Globalists: the end of empire and the birth of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Stewart, James B. 2018. "The far right's toxic forbears." History News Network, February 26. Available online: <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/168129>. Last accessed February 27, 2018.

[Google Scholar](#)

Stubblebine, W. Craig. 1965. Institutional elements in the financing of education. *Southern Economic Journal* 32(1): 15–34.

[Google Scholar](#)

Sweeney, James R. 2008. *Race, reason, and Massive Resistance: the diary of David J. Mays, 1954–1959*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Temin, Peter. 2018. *The Vanishing Middle Class: prejudice and power in a dual economy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

[Google Scholar](#)

Thomas Jefferson Center for Political Economy. 1965. Report on the Virginia Plan for Universal Education. *Occasional Paper No.:* 2.

[Google Scholar](#)

Tullock, Gordon. 1967. The welfare costs of tariffs, monopolies, and theft. *Western Economic Journal* 5(3): 224–32.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Tullock, Gordon. 1975. Comment on Rae's 'The Limits of Consensual Decision'. *American Political Science Review* 69(4): 1295–7.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Tullock, Gordon. 1981. The rhetoric and reality of redistribution. *Southern Economic Journal* 47(4): 895–907.

[Web of Science®](#) | [Google Scholar](#)

Wagner, Richard. 2017. *James M. Buchanan and liberal political economy: A rational reconstruction*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

[Google Scholar](#)

Wicksell, Knut. 1896 [1958]. A new principle of just taxation (James M. Buchanan) (Trans.) Trans. In *Classics in the Theory of Public Finance*, edited by R. A. Musgrave and A. T. Peacock. London: MacMillan.

[Google Scholar](#)

Williams, Robert F. 1964. Hardly a surprise. *Virginia Journal of Education* Volume 58(3): 11–12.

[Google Scholar](#)

ABOUT WILEY ONLINE LIBRARY

- Privacy Policy
- Terms of Use
- About Cookies
- Manage Cookies
- Accessibility
- Wiley Research DE&I Statement and Publishing Policies
- Developing World Access

HELP & SUPPORT

- Contact Us
- Training and Support
- DMCA & Reporting Piracy

OPPORTUNITIES

- Subscription Agents
- Advertisers & Corporate Partners

CONNECT WITH WILEY

- The Wiley Network
- Wiley Press Room